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Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6273rd meeting

Thursday, 18 February 2010, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Araud	(France)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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10-24445 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*). In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Pascoe: Since the briefing of 27 January, efforts to bring about Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have continued. A proposal from United States Envoy Mitchell that the parties begin indirect talks with United States mediation is currently under serious consideration. Israel has indicated its readiness to work on this basis, while President Abbas has been engaged in intensive consultations and sought clarifications.

The Secretary-General hopes that President Abbas will move forward on the basis of this practical proposal so that serious talks can begin. He notes Prime Minister Netanyahu's stated commitment to a two-State solution, although confusion as to the Israeli Government's intentions arises from statements by various of its officials.

We continue to stress the importance of doing everything possible to ensure that negotiations lead in a clear time frame to an agreement resolving all final status issues, including Jerusalem, borders, refugees, security, settlements and water. We believe that the international consensus on what it will take to reach a sustainable agreement is strong and that an active Quartet will be vital to support the process.

The Israeli Government's partial restraint on settlement construction in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, remains in effect and has led t slowdown of construction activity. However, violat of the restraint orders have been identified by Israeli authorities in at least 29 settlements, with Defence Ministry that it is issuing demolition and s work orders against violators. While the Is Government's settlement restraint constitutes a beyond previous positions, the settlements themse are illegal and continued settlement activity viol Israel's Road Map obligations and prejudges outcome of negotiations. We therefore urge additi measures to enforce the restraint. We also urge extension into a comprehensive freeze, includin East Jerusalem, as well as its continuation beyond current 10-month period.

There were no demolitions of Palestinian ho or evictions in East Jerusalem during the repor period — a positive development which we hope continue. We continue to call for the reopening Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem in accord with Road Map obligations. The status of Jerusale to be determined through negotiations, and we bel that a way must be found through negotiations Jerusalem to emerge as the capital of two States.

The efforts of the Palestinian Authority (PA meet its Road Map obligations to combat terro have continued in the West Bank, reflecting impres achievements in reform, professionalization performance. It is important that the Palesti Authority leadership continue to speak out aga violence and incitement. On 10 February, an Is soldier was killed by a knife attack. The incident condemned by Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad.

There were 79 Israeli army incursions into W Bank towns and villages in response to alleged secu threats. Nearly 500 Palestinians were arrested. 12 February, Israeli security forces shot and kill Palestinian for attempting to stab a soldier in Heb while 41 other Palestinians were injured in action the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Israeli security fo also carried out extensive operations in Shuafat refu camp in East Jerusalem between 8 and 10 February.

Palestinian, Israeli and foreign protes continued demonstrating against the barrier where being constructed within the West Bank in contraven of the Advisory Opinion of the International Cour Justice. There have been raids into Ramallah aga individuals and organizations involved in protests.

positive action, we note that Israel began work on 10 February to reroute a section of the barrier around the village of Bil'in to implement a 2007 Israeli High Court order, which is expected to return 700,000 square metres of arable land to the village, while leaving approximately 150,000 square metres west of the barrier.

We are also concerned at continued settler violence. There have been 8 reported attacks by settlers on Palestinians, including on 9 February when settlers shot and injured a Palestinian teenager. We note legitimate Israeli and Palestinian security concerns. Sustainable security will be best achieved through intensified cooperation, the continued empowerment of PA security efforts and PA performance, the curtailment of IDF incursions into Palestinian areas, full respect for legitimate non-violent protest, Israeli action to curb settler violence, Palestinian action against incitement, and progress in both political negotiations and economic development.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded the removal of 24 closure obstacles throughout the Hebron governorate, continuing the gradual easing of Palestinian movement in areas to the east of the barrier. However, as of 16 February, 550 obstacles to movement remain in place throughout the West Bank, of which 89 are permanently and partially staffed checkpoints. The Israeli Government recently allowed tourist buses to use the Jalameh vehicle crossing from northern Israel into the West Bank with the aim of boosting the Palestinian tourism sector. The Israeli Government is encouraged to continue to facilitate this access and to take more far-reaching measures as well.

The important work of Palestinian State-building through institutional reform and development is continuing. However, the recurrent financing requirements facing the Palestinian Authority are still substantial and projected at about $1.2 billion in 2010, despite reduced spending on wages and subsidies. We encourage donors to channel their assistance first and foremost through the single treasury account and to support the priorities articulated by the Palestinian Authority for 2010. We welcome recent transfers and pledges and also strongly encourage those donors who have not yet done so to frontload financial support to allow for greater predictability. We also stress the importance of applying accepted principles of aid effectiveness to ensure better targeting and maximize programme impact.

On 8 February, the Palestinian Cabinet called for local elections to be held on 17 July 2010, in accordance with the local election law for all 335 municipal councils in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian Central Election Commission is planning to start registering voters on 6 March. We take this opportunity to urge Hamas to respond positively to this important part of the democratic process.

Senior Fatah and independent figures visited Gaza during the reporting period in an effort to ease tensions and promote reconciliation. Other factions in the Gaza Strip have also been active in this direction, and an Arab parliamentary group visited the Strip on 15 and 16 February. However, to date, there has been no further progress in finalizing an agreement based on Egypt's proposal.

It is deeply regrettable that there has been no breakthrough on a prisoner exchange to secure the release of Corporal Shalit and Palestinian prisoners, despite intensive efforts in recent months.

While the Hamas de facto authorities are reportedly exerting efforts to prevent the launching of rockets at Israel, 19 projectiles were fired from Gaza and 11 reached southern Israel during the reporting period, with no damage or injuries reported. Three barrels of explosives washed up on Israeli beaches between 1 and 3 February, with a further two detonating at sea. There was an improvised explosive device (IED) attack on a convoy of International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) vehicles on 4 February, which damaged one vehicle, and two other IED attacks, reportedly by Salafist elements, killing one Hamas militant and injuring four others. One Palestinian was killed in an Israeli air strike, and seven others were injured in IDF incursions and operations. We continue to condemn rocket fire, and call for its cessation and on all parties to maintain calm and to strictly observe international humanitarian law.

We continue to receive reports of the smuggling of weapons supplied from within the region. Egypt is maintaining its efforts, as all States are called on to do in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Egypt is also seizing explosives and installing metal sheeting in areas along its border with Gaza. Those efforts further underscore the vital importance of opening all legitimate crossings for imports and exports, as envisaged in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access and in resolution 1860 (2009).

The Israeli closure of Gaza remains in place. That counterproductive policy is empowering smugglers and militants, destroying legitimate commerce and causing unacceptable hardship for the civilian population, more than half of whom are children.

During the reporting period, food and hygiene products comprised 84 per cent of imports and a weekly average of 561 trucks entered the Strip, which is slightly more than the previous reporting period, but far short of the weekly average of 2,087 trucks before the Hamas takeover in June 2007. Cooking gas supplies met only 48 per cent of estimated weekly needs during the reporting period. We take positive note of the entry of a slightly wider range of materials, such as glass, electricity spare parts and one elevator for a maternity hospital. The first phase of the northern Gaza wastewater treatment plant project was completed in late January. We also note that the export of cut flowers and strawberries continued.

However, the scale and quantity of goods entering Gaza through the Israeli crossings, as well as the level of exports, remain far short of requirements. Sufficient materials to restart civilian reconstruction are still not entering Gaza through the Israeli crossings. We again express our disappointment that there has been no satisfactory Israeli response to the United Nations proposal to complete stalled projects for housing, schools and health facilities. We also continue to be concerned about fuel shortages at the Gaza power plant as a result of funding shortfalls and technical failures, leading to rolling blackouts.

If I may turn to the regional situation, we deplore the heightened and belligerent rhetoric during the reporting period and call for its cessation. We continue to support all efforts to revive the Israeli-Syrian track and a broader resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as envisaged in Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. The situation in the occupied Syrian Golan remained calm despite continued settlement activity.

In Lebanon, on 14 February, a large rally took place in Beirut to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 22 others. On that occasion, leaders of the 14 March coalition commemorated Mr. Hariri's contribution to Lebanon's development and reaffirmed their determination to establish the truth behind his murder. Prime Minister Saad Hariri emphasized the importance of national unity and Lebanon's role with regard to inter-Arab reconciliation. In a statement, the Secretary-Gener said that he stood with the people of Lebanon a reaffirmed the commitment of the United Nations the efforts of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

On 15 February, clashes between members radical Islamist movements and members of Fatah bro out in the Palestinian refugee camp of Ain el-Helwe near Saida. At least one person was killed as a result the fighting before calm was restored to the camp. Th incident disrupted an otherwise generally calm situati in the camps.

Even as progress is being made in t reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared refugee cam funding remains a major concern. The United Natio urges the international community to renew its financ support for the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared so th progress can be sustained.

The situation in the area of operations of t United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFI remains quiet. On 31 January 2010, the II apprehended a 17-year-old Lebanese shepherd in t vicinity of Kafr Shuba, alleging that he had cross south of the Blue Line. On 1 February, the civilian w handed over to UNIFIL, which, in turn, handed h over to the Lebanese authorities. An investigation in the incident is ongoing. Israeli overflights ha continued on an almost daily basis, with a mark increase on several days in early February.

We remain deeply concerned at the curre stalemate. We call for the resumption of talks on fin status issues, implementation of Road M commitments, continued efforts to improve econom and security conditions, and a different and mo positive approach to Gaza. We remain committed to end to the occupation that began in 1967, an end to t conflict through the creation of an independe Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in pea and security, and comprehensive regional peace, accordance with Security Council resolutions, previo agreements, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiativ

The President (*spoke in French*): I tha Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached the Council's prior consultations, I now invite Coun members to informal consultations to continue o discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.